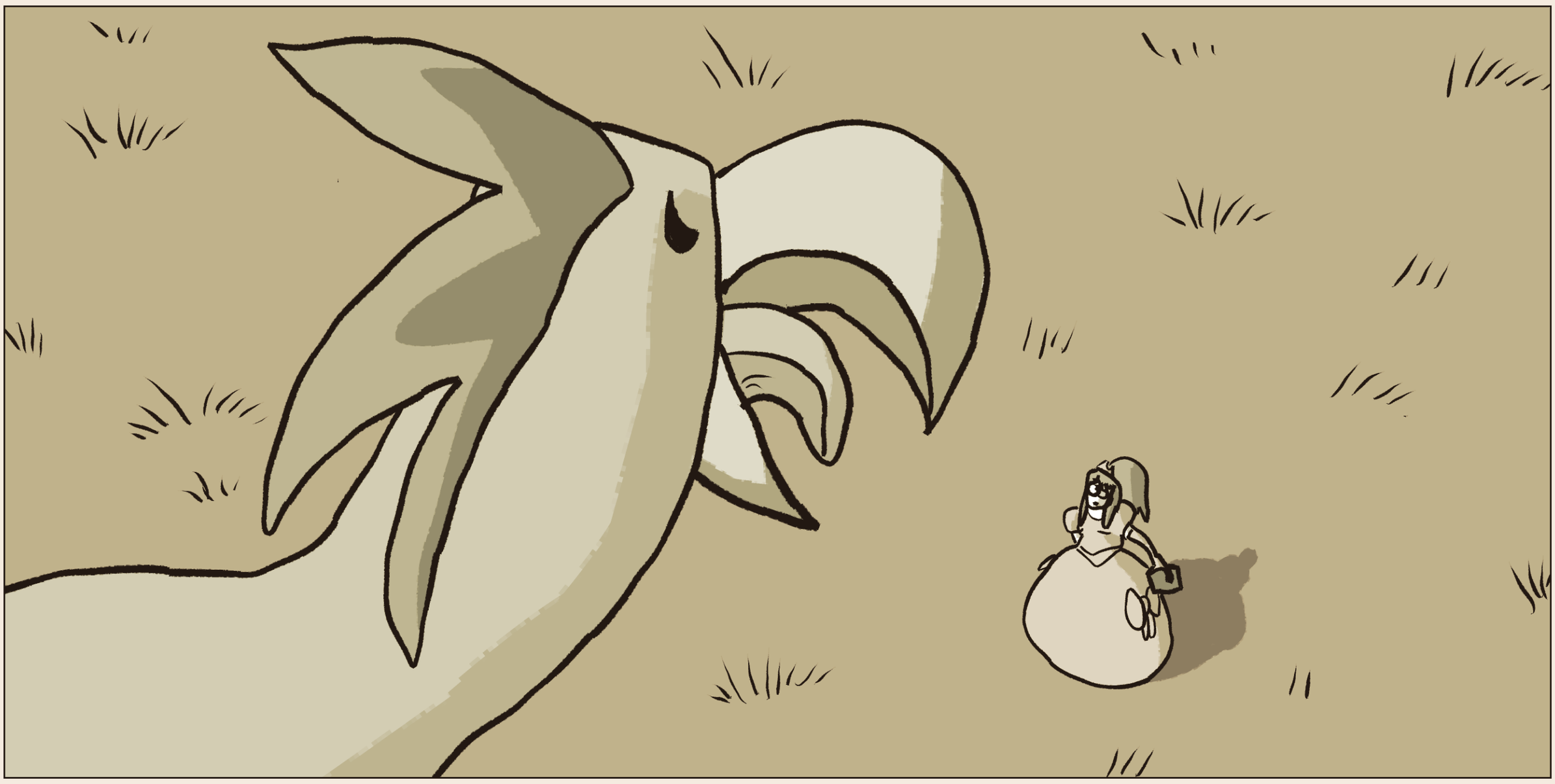
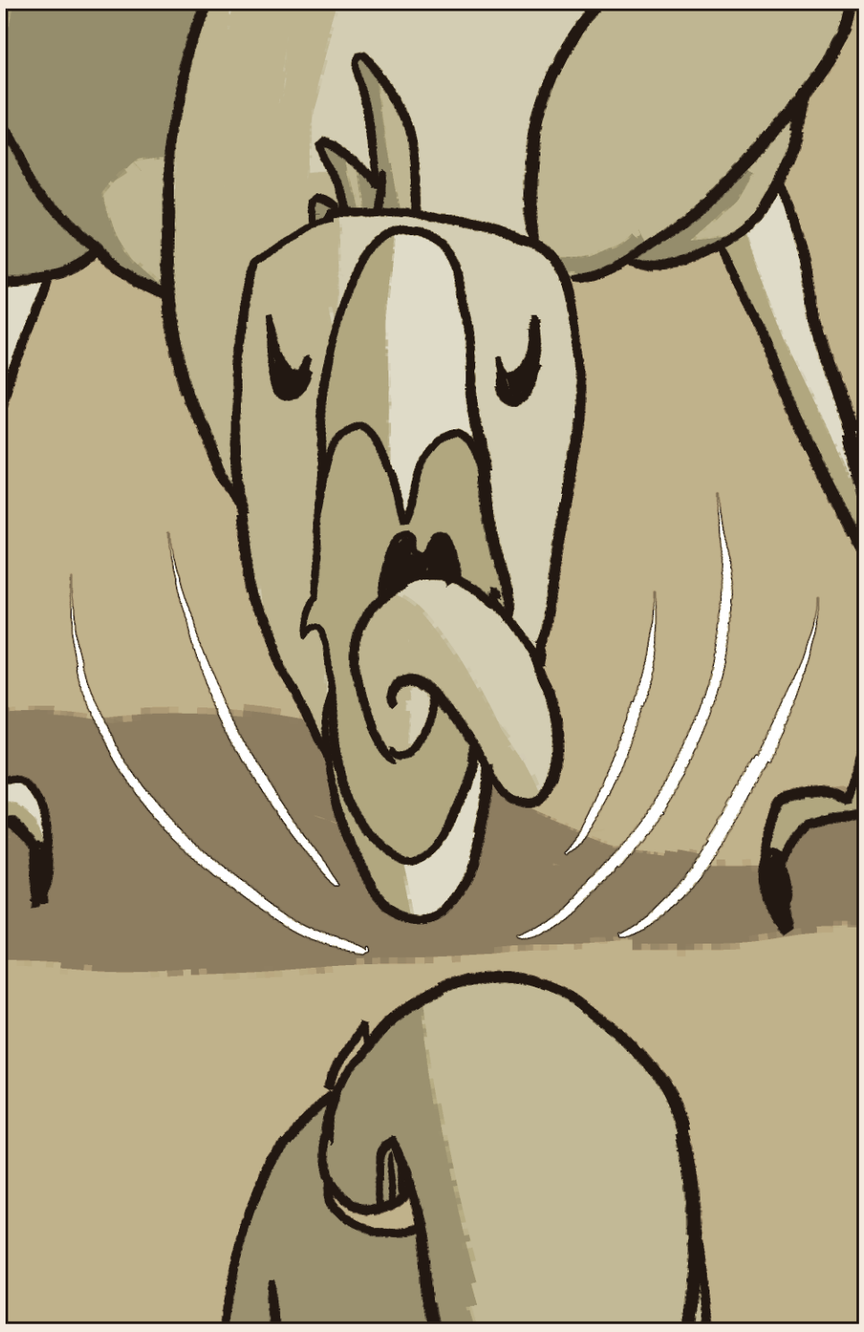
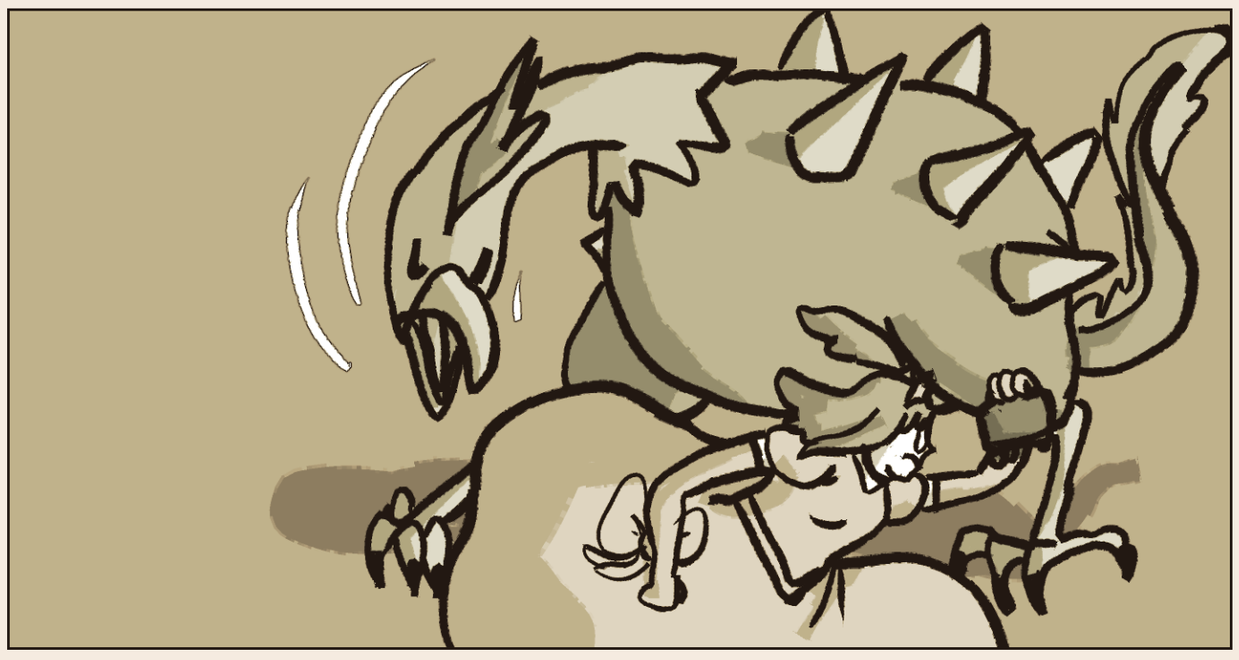
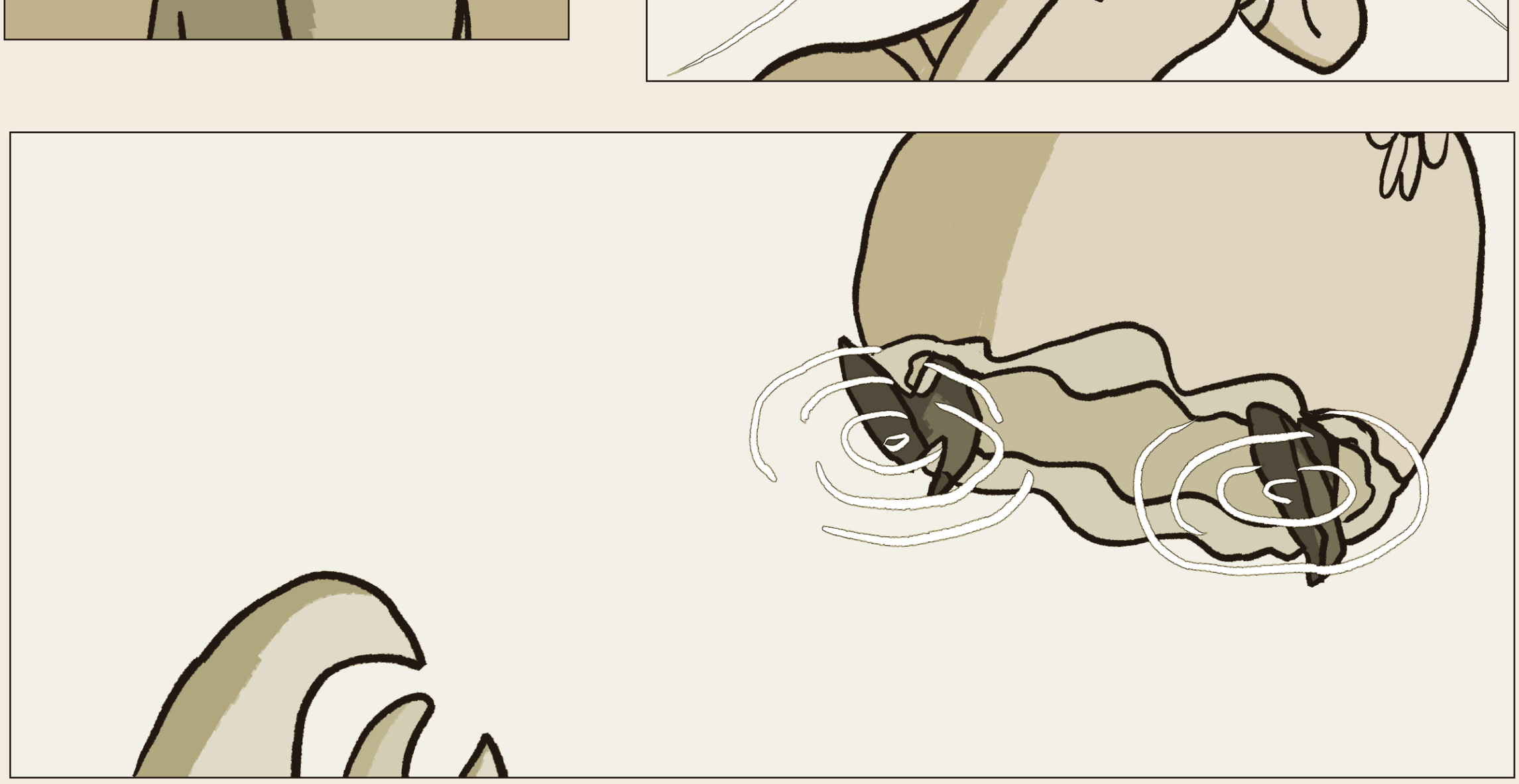
CHAPTER 12

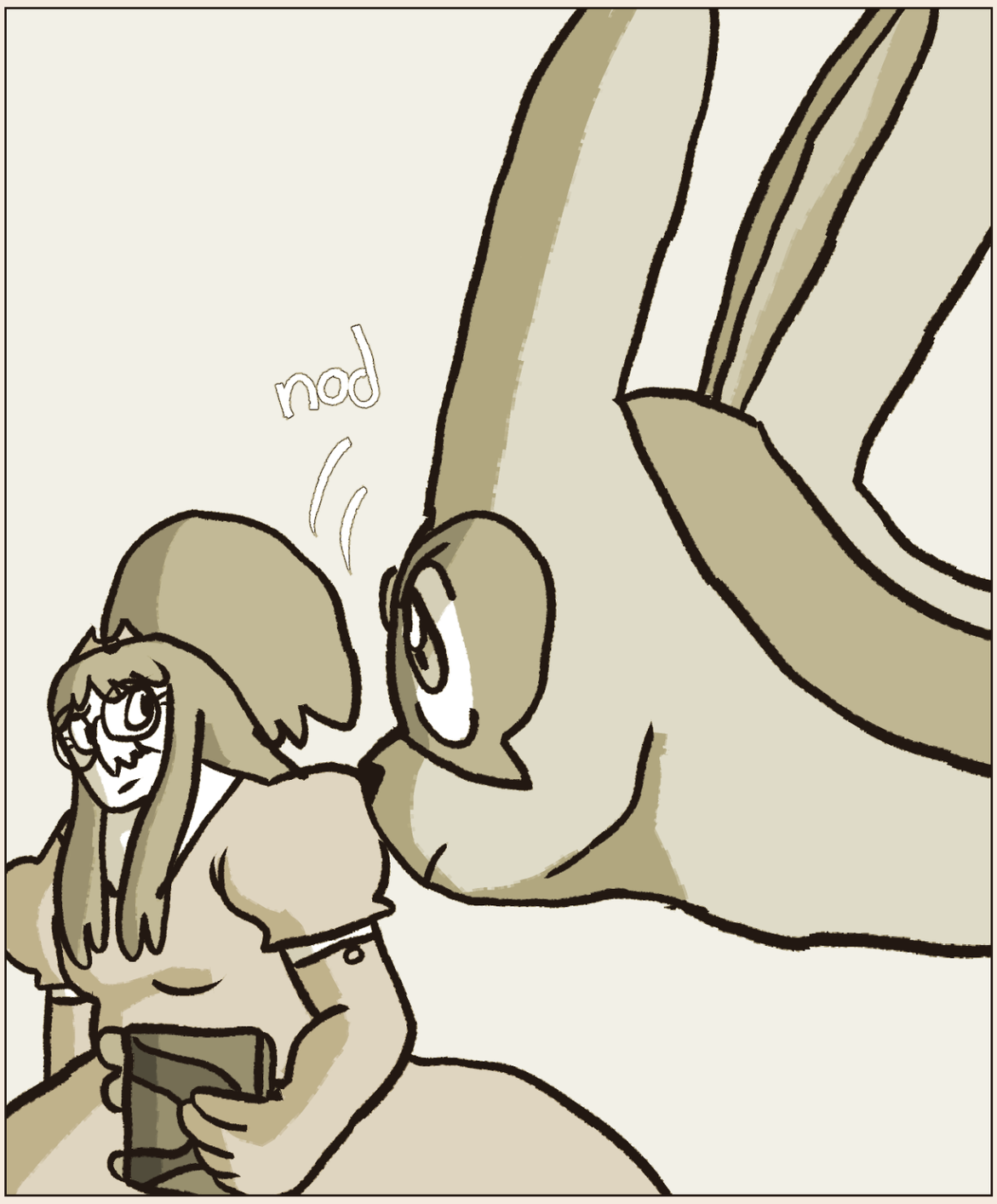








TOPAZ, NOW!!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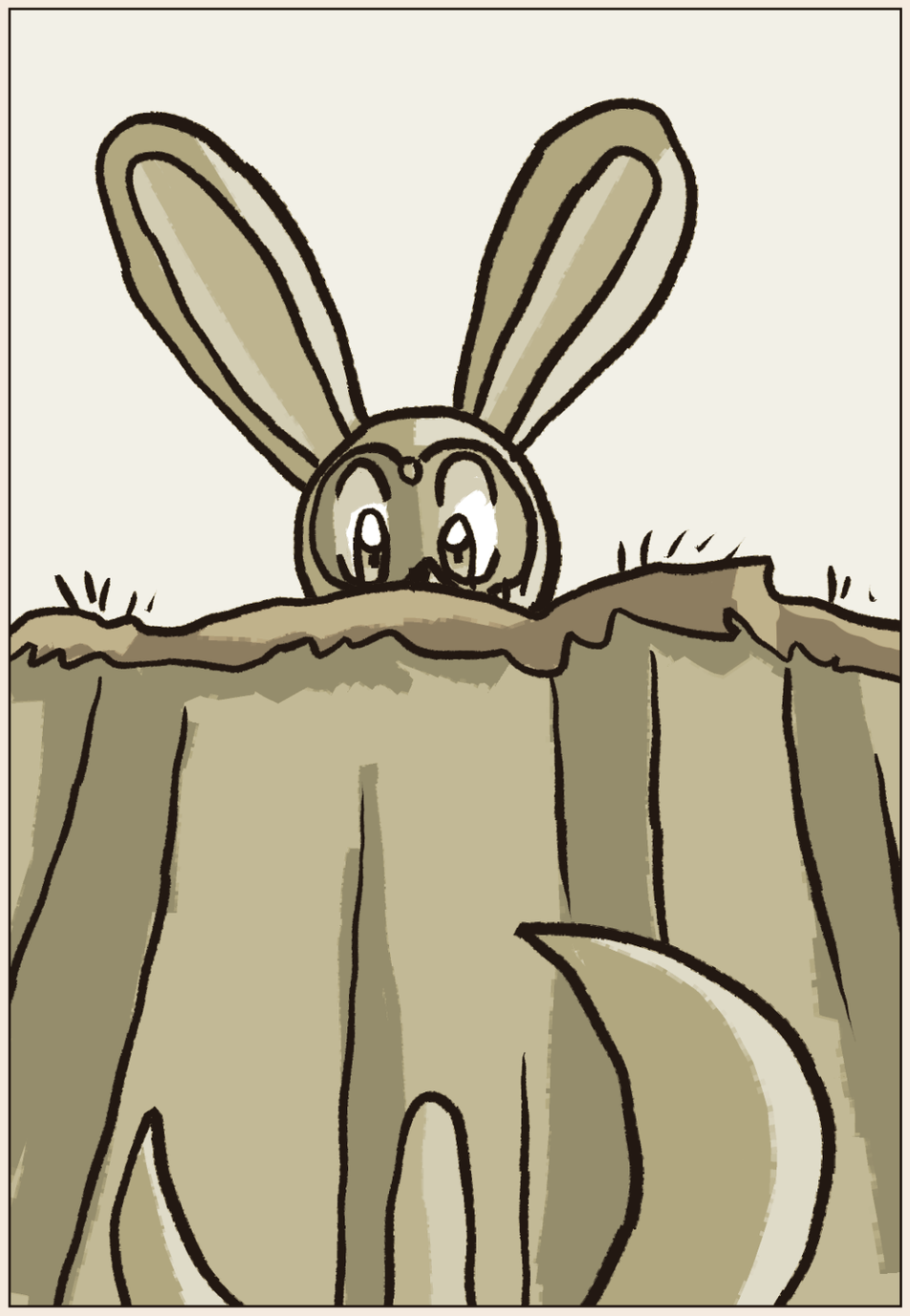
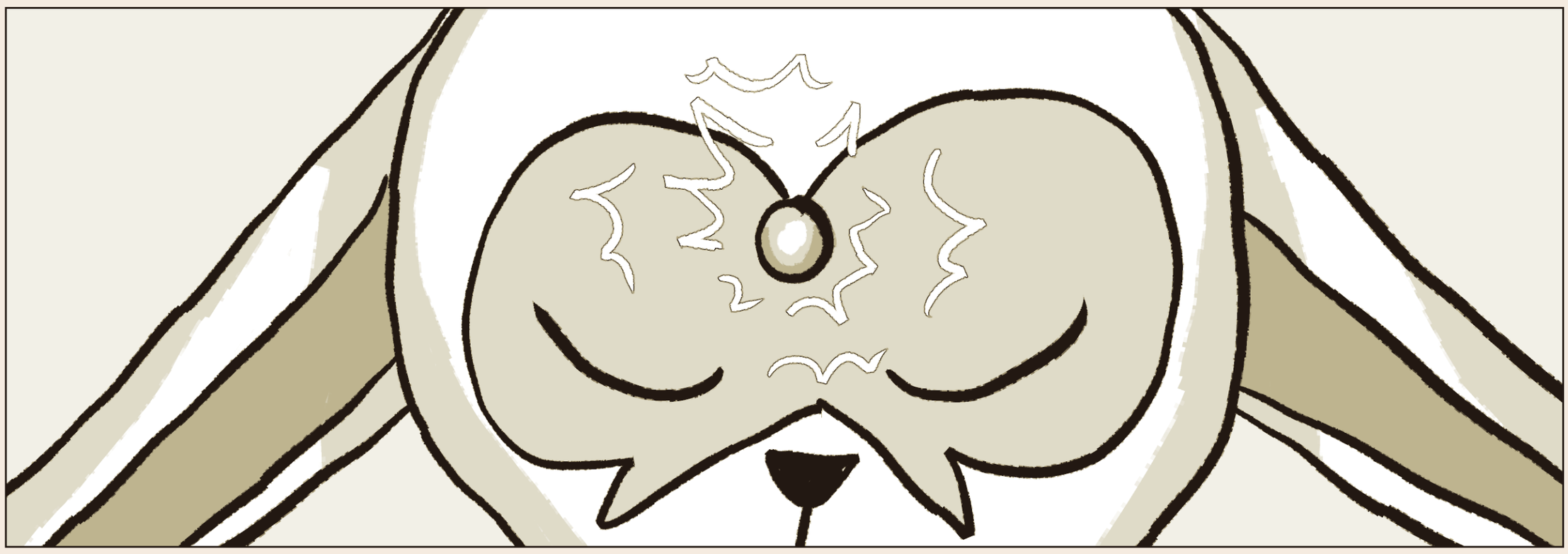
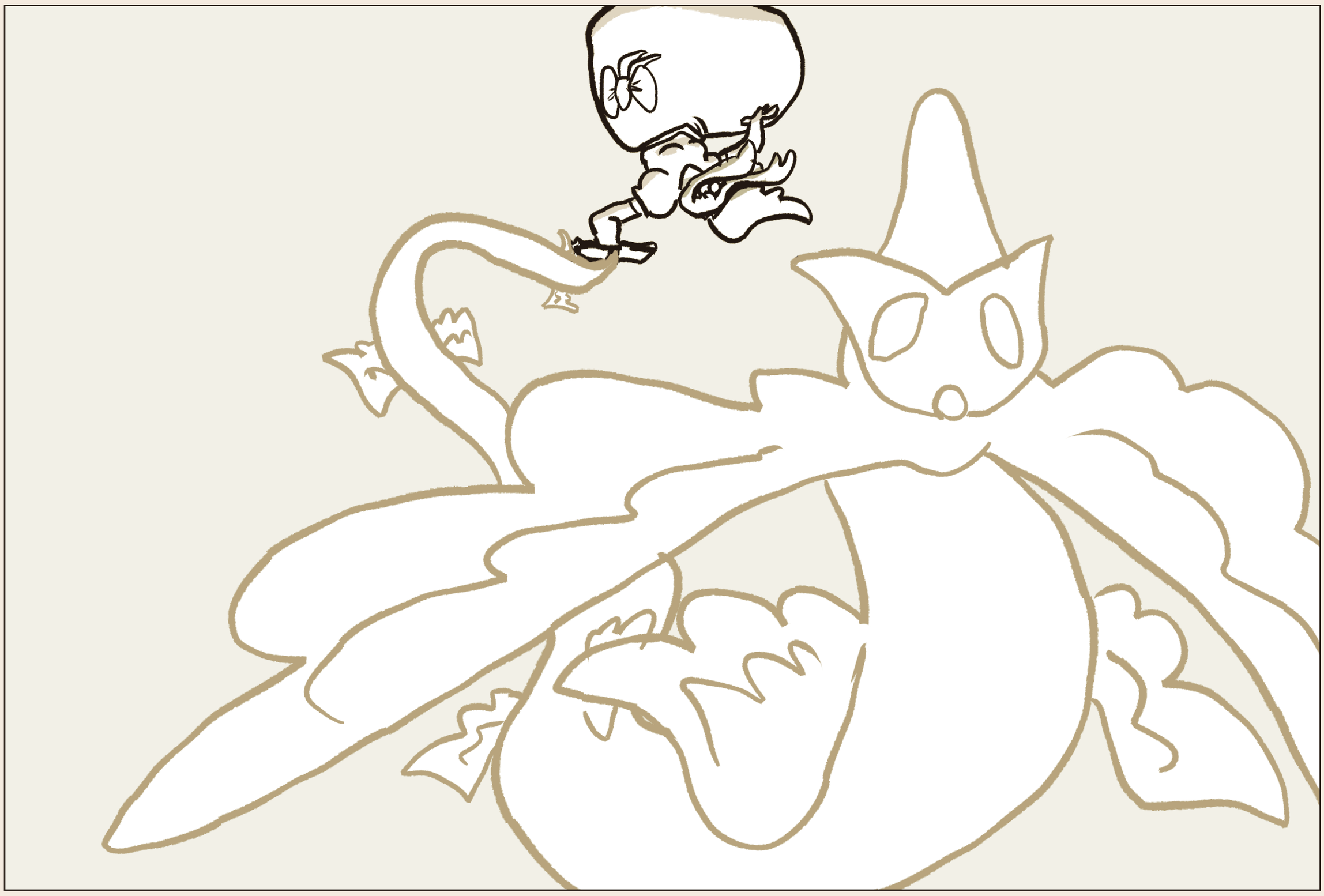
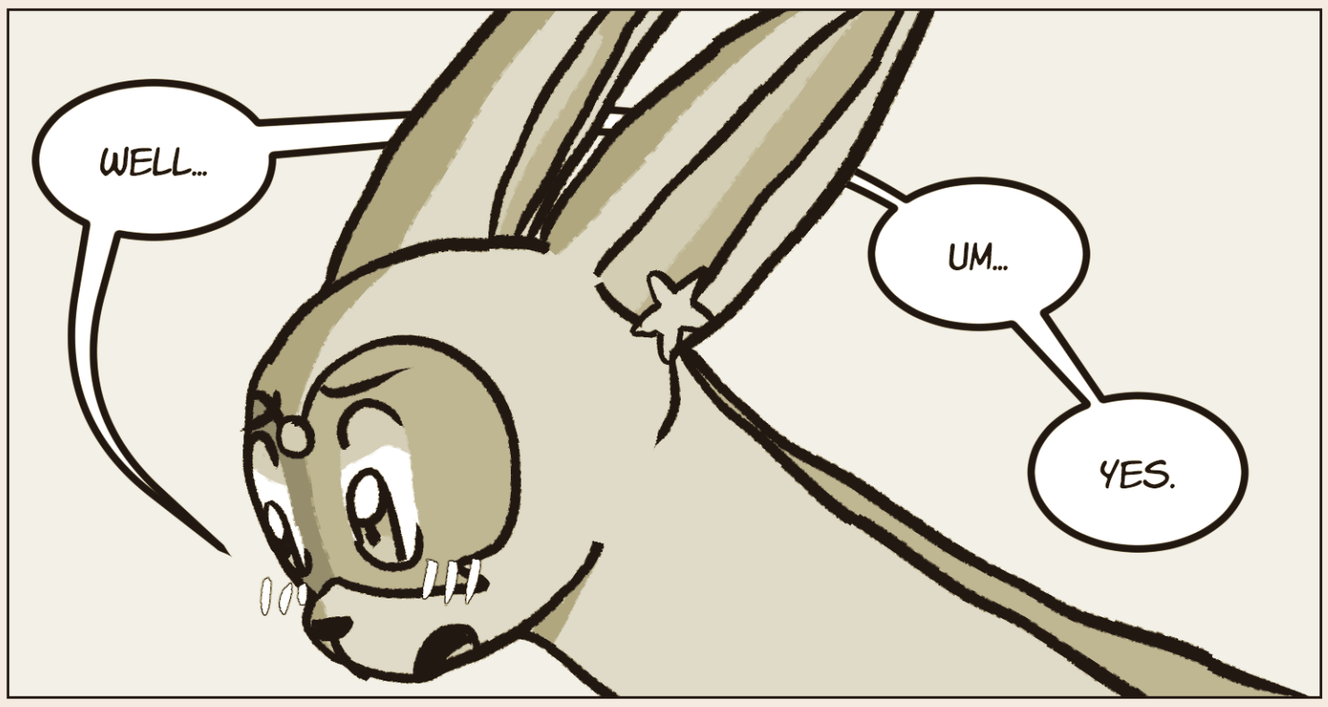
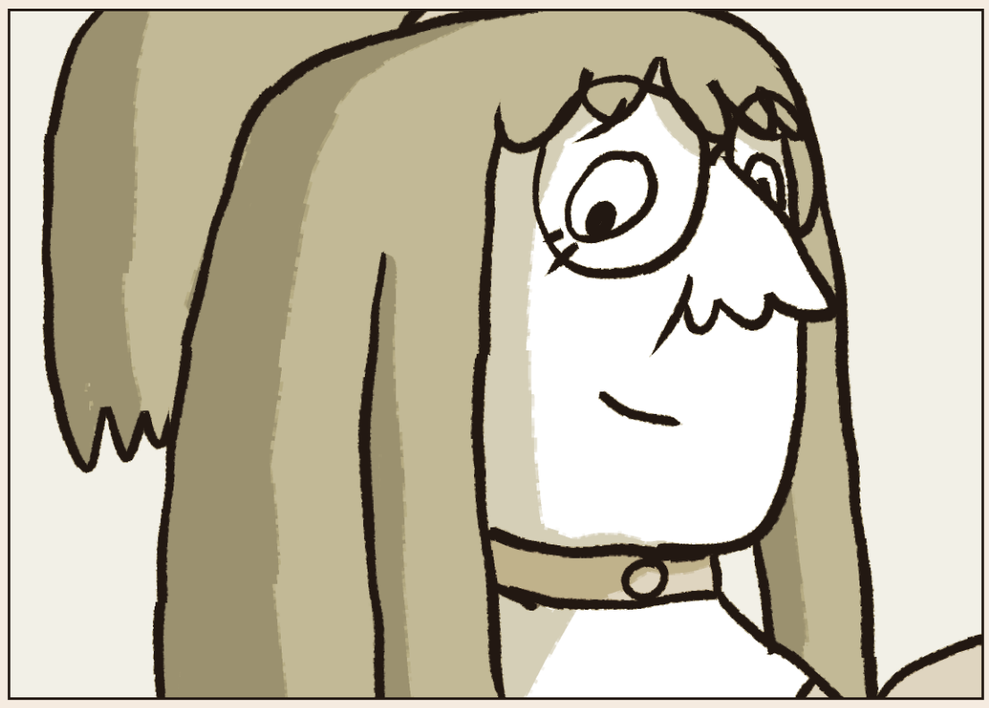


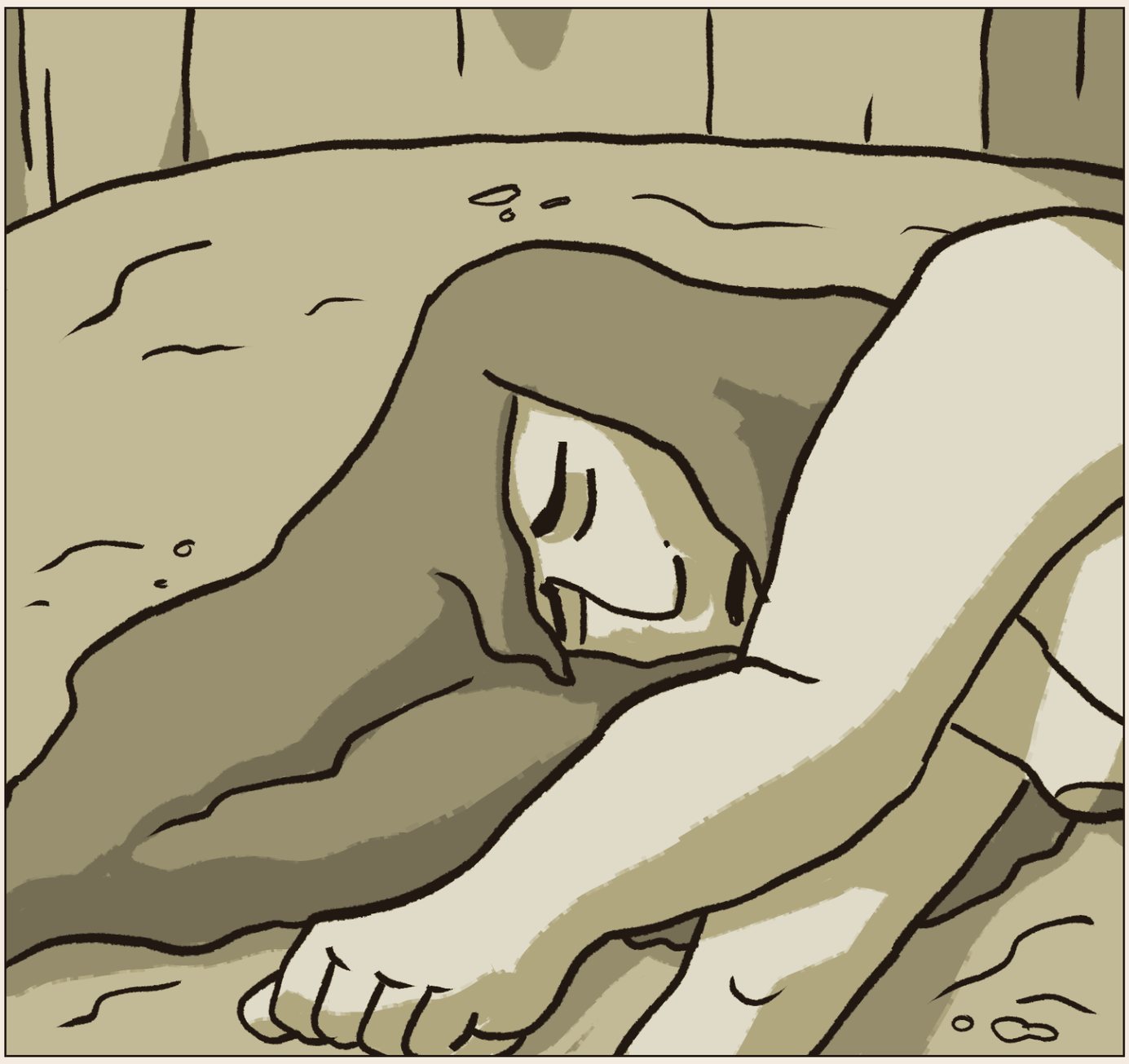


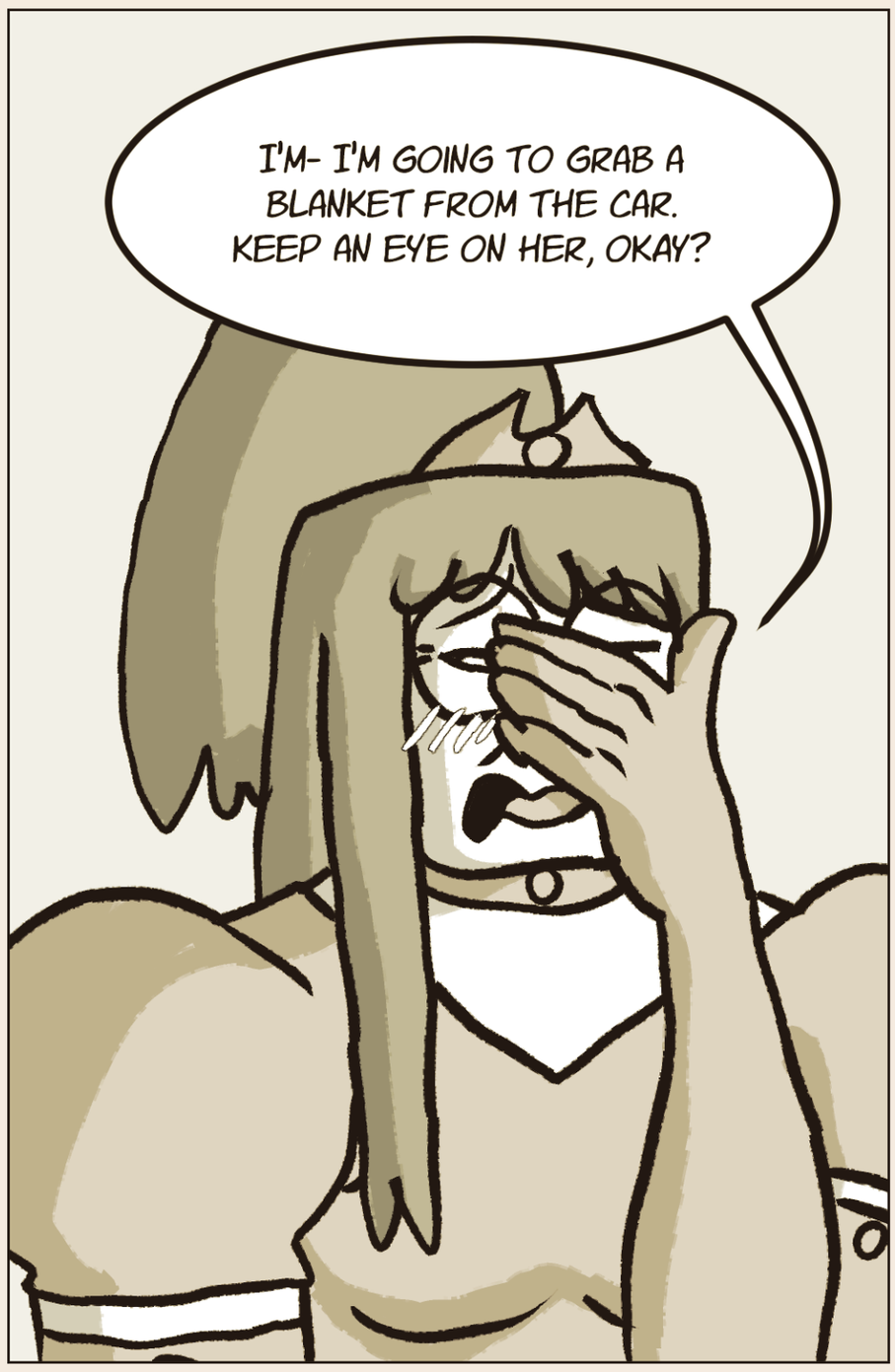


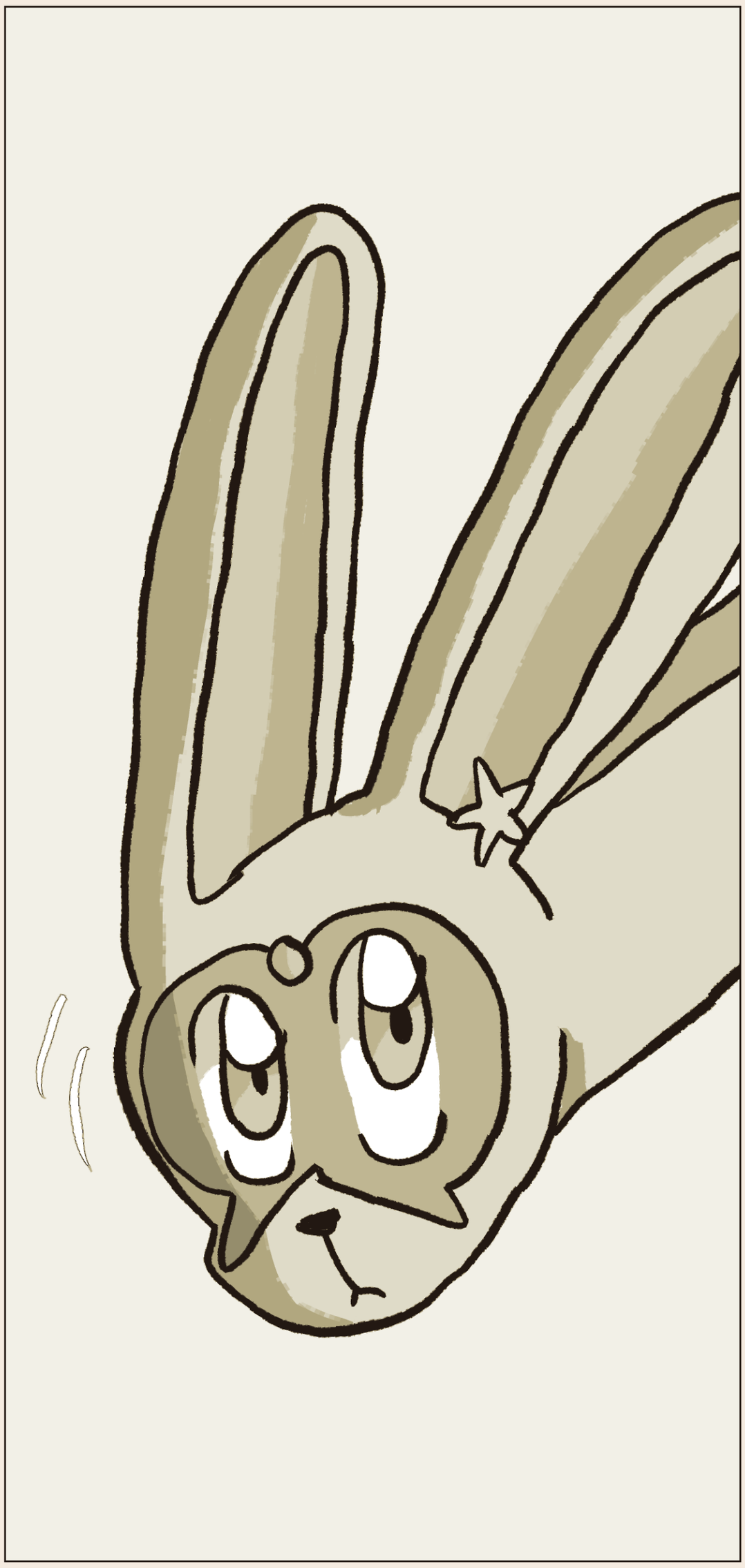
THAT'S WHAT YOU DID LAST TIME?

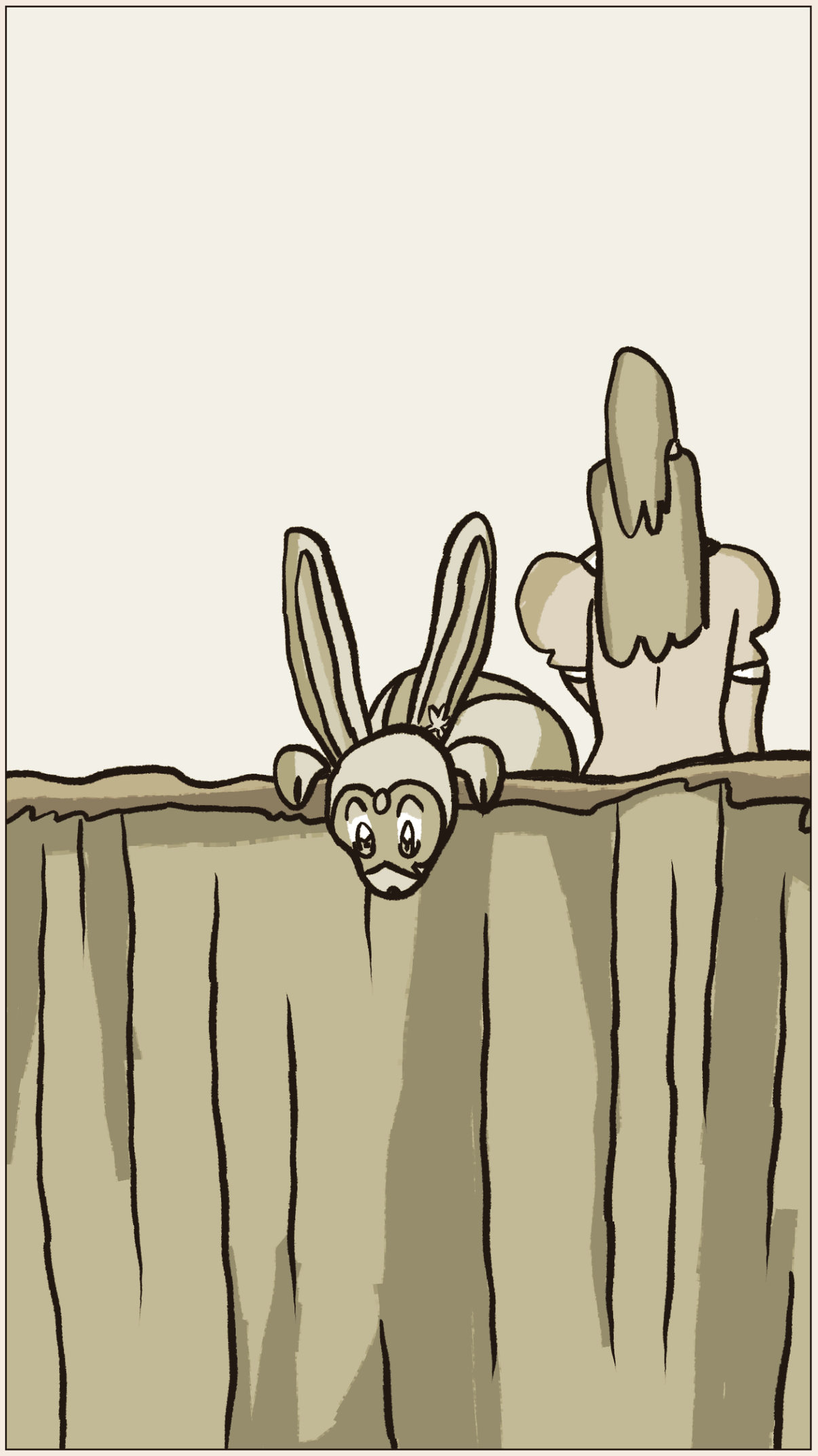

WELL...
UM...
YES.

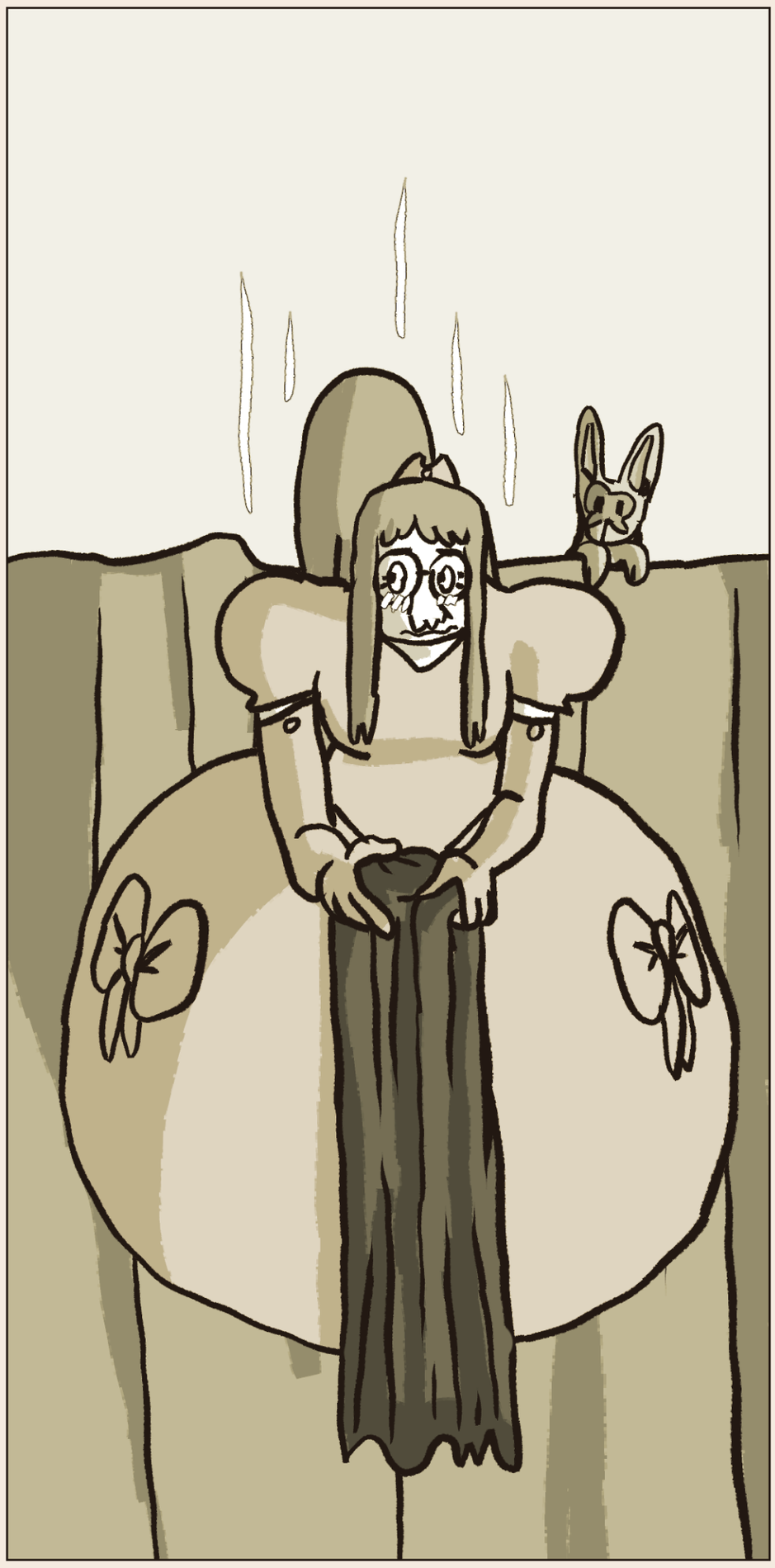


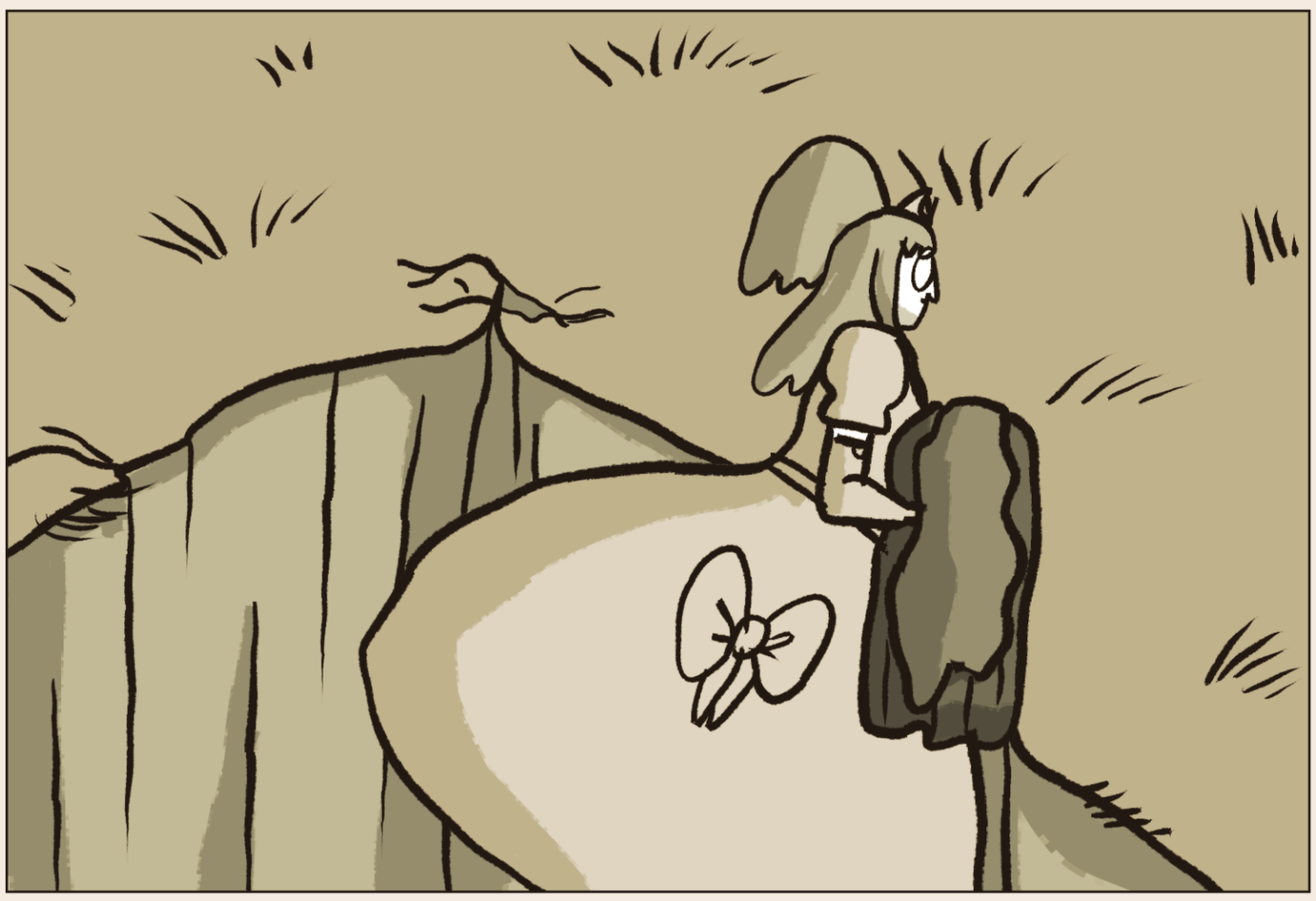


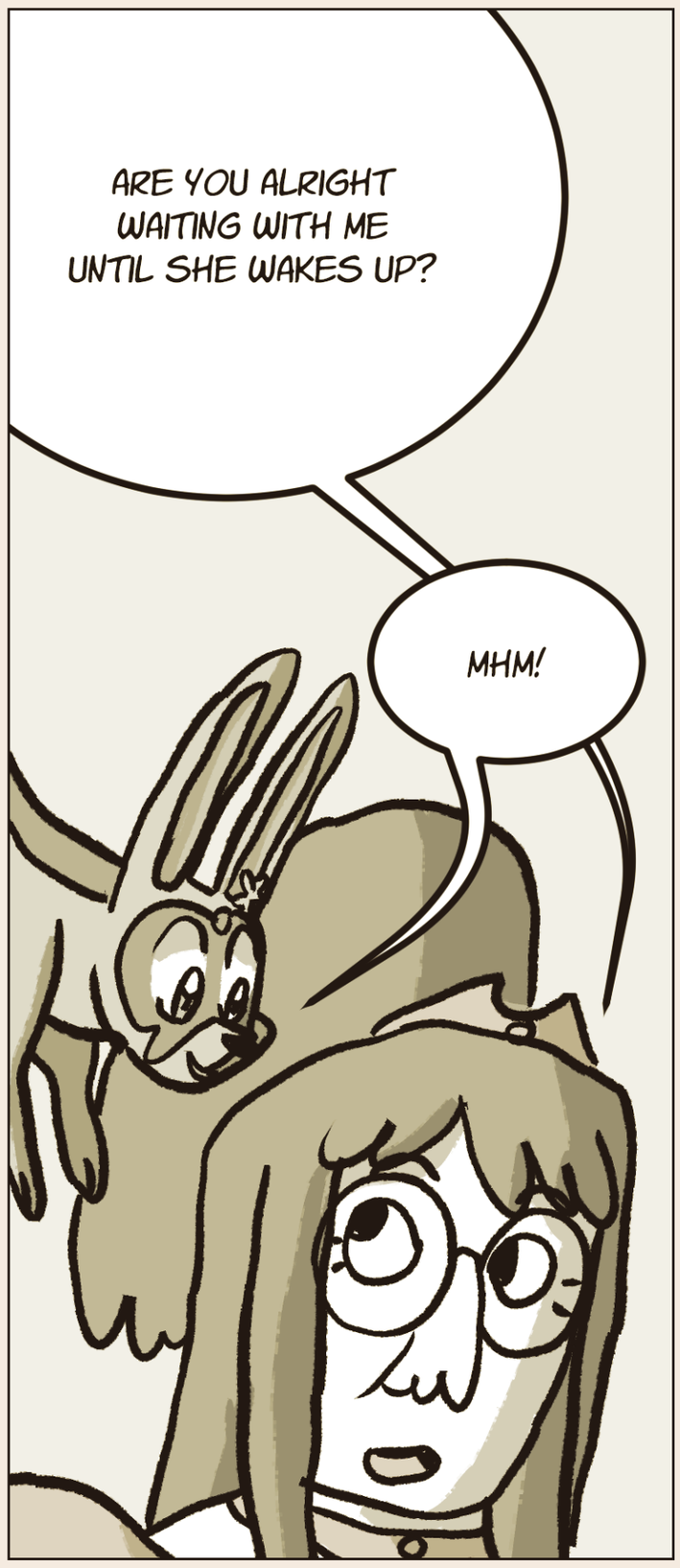

I'M- I'M GOING TO GRAB A BLANKET FROM THE CAR. KEEP AN EYE ON HER, OKAY?










ARE YOU ALRIGHT WAITING WITH ME UNTIL SHE WAKES UP?
MHM!

ARE YOU GOING TO DISPEL?

MMM...

I FEEL LIKE HER WAKING UP IN A STRANGE WOMAN'S CAR IS BETTER THAN A STRANGE MAN'S...

I'LL KEEP UP THE DISGUISE FOR NOW.

SO...

HAS SOPHIE...

SAID ANYTHING ABOUT ME TO YOU?

MHM. SHE'S VERY, VERY MAD AT YOU STILL.

GREAT... I'M NOT SURPRISED THOUGH.

WHY IS SHE SO MAD?

WELL...

I MEAN I LIED TO HER. ABOUT WHO I WAS.

SHE THOUGHT I WAS A WOMAN,

BUT...

SHE HAS EVERY RIGHT TO BE UPSET. I TRICKED HER INTO LIKING ME.

BUT SHE LIKED YOU AS CYRUS TOO, RIGHT?

NOT LIKE THAT, TOPAZ. IT'S A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIKE.

NOT THAT SHE EVEN LIKES ME AS A FRIEND ANYMORE. THERE GOES THE ONLY MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP I'VE HAD WITH A WOMAN.

BESIDES MY MOM.

SHIT.

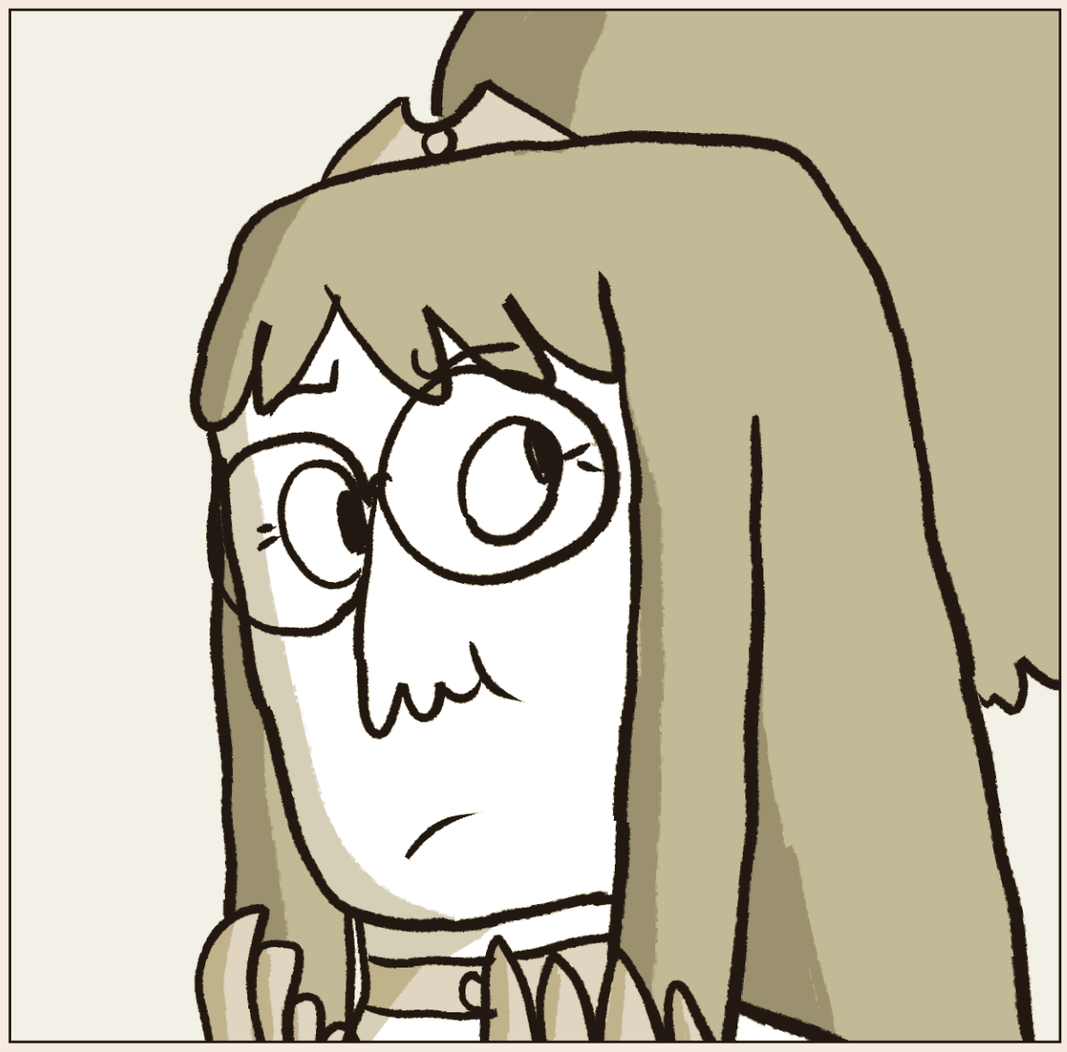
SHIT!

WHAT? WHAT'S WRONG?

I HAVE TO CALL HER, IT WAS HER BIRTHDAY THE OTHER DAY, OH MY GOD I COMPLETELY FORGOT.

YOUR...
MOM?

YES,
YES, MY-



DO YOU...

KNOW WHAT
A MOM IS?

THEORETICALLY,
I DO.

OH, JEEZ. OF COURSE. YEAH.
UM. OKAY. WELL, I NEED
TO TALK TO HER, SO-

HEY, ARE YOU OKAY?
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

WH-WHAT...?
WHERE AM I?
WHO ARE YOU?

MY NAME IS SUMMER.
YOU'RE ABOUT FIVE MILES
SOUTH OF THE CITY.
I, UH- FOUND YOU
OUT HERE.

I- I...

WHAT ARE
YOU WEARING?

THAT'S... NOT
IMPORTANT
RIGHT NOW.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
DO YOU REMEMBER
ANYTHING BEFORE...

PASSING OUT?

...ISABELLA.
I- I DON'T-

IT'S OKAY IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.

DO YOU HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO? I CAN DRIVE YOU THERE.

OKAY.

JUST GIVE ME THE ADDRESS AND WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY.

SHUT

JUST HANG OUT IN HERE UNTIL
I'VE DROPPED HER OFF, OKAY?

DISPEL.

SORRY.
BUMPY RIDE?

BLEHHH...

GOOD THING
YOU DON'T EAT.

HOPEFULLY SHE ISN'T
TOO PISSED AT ME.

Mom

RIIIING
RIIIING
RIIIING

HELLO?

HI, MOM!
HAPPY, UH,
LATE BIRTHDAY.

...

...MOM?

LISTEN, I REALLY AM SORRY FOR CALLING SO LATE, IT'S, UH- WORK HAS BEEN... BUSY.

I'LL COME TO VISIT-

FINALLY!

IT'S BEEN YEARS! DOES YOUR JOB NOT GIVE YOU PTO? YOU NEED TO ASK FOR DAYS OFF-

I KNOW, I KNOW, I SWEAR I WILL, IT'S JUST... HARD TO FIND A TIME TO GET AWAY, YOU KNOW?

WELL, IT'S HARD FOR ME TO NOT HAVE MY OWN SON VISIT FOR- NEED I SAY IT AGAIN- YEARS?

YES- I KNOW-

I'M ALL ALONE IN THIS LITTLE APARTMENT!

YOU COMPLAIN EVERY TIME YOU GO OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS-

NOT THE POINT.

CAN'T I JUST HAVE ONE DAY WITH MY SON? YEARS!!

I KNOW, MOM. I WILL

GOOD. GOOD, I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

HOW WAS YOUR BIRTHDAY?

OH, BORING. EVELYN THREW ME A PARTY AND IT WAS JUST *AWFUL*. THAT WOMAN DOES NOT KNOW ME AT *ALL*, DESPITE US KNOWING EACH OTHER FOR, WHAT, TWENTY YEARS? AT THIS POINT?

HA, SORRY TO HEAR THAT.

OH, YOU THINKS IT'S FUNNY? SHE GOT ME THIS STUPID POPULAR ROMANCE BOOK. I *HATE*-

ROMANCE, YES, I'M AWARE.

IT DISGUSTS ME.

I KNOW.

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? I HAVEN'T TALKED TO YOU SINCE CHRISTMAS.

UM-

DON'T SAY CROSSDRESSING.

NOTHING. AS, AH, USUAL.

...

...? MOM?

OH, NOTHING. I JUST EXPECT YOU TO ACTUALLY TELL ME THINGS EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

MOM...

I REFUSE TO BELIEVE NOTHING EVER HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE. IT'S JUST NOT POSSIBLE.

...IT IS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU.

BULLSHIT, KID!

MOM!

I'M YOUR MOTHER, I'M OBLIGATED TO PRY INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE.

THERE'S NOTHING TO PRY INTO! I'M BORING! UNINTERESTING! I HAVE *NOTHING* GOING FOR ME, AND I LIKELY NEVER *WILL*!

I WAKE UP IN THE MORNING, I GO TO WORK, I MAKE DINNER, AND I GO TO BED. THAT'S IT! YOU DO THIS EVERY TIME, AND EVERY TIME, I HAVE TO EXPLAIN HOW *THAT'S IT*.

I WISH, I GENUINELY DO, WISH THAT I HAD SOMETHING NEW I COULD TELL YOU, BUT I JUST-

I'M A MISERABLE PERSON.
I'M SORRY, I CAN'T
CHANGE THAT.

SOMETHING DID
HAPPEN,
DIDN'T IT?

WHAT
DOES IT...

FEEL
LIKE.

WHAT DOES
WHAT FEEL LIKE?

TO BE A...

NEVER MIND.

SORRY. I DIDN'T MEANT
TO BLOW UP AT YOU,
YOU DIDN'T DESERVE THAT.

CYRUS...

YOU CAN TALK TO ME.
I'M NOT... HOW I USED TO BE.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR...
CONDITIONS BETTER NOW.

I DON'T WANT TO
ALMOST LOSE YOU AGAIN,

I'M NOT-

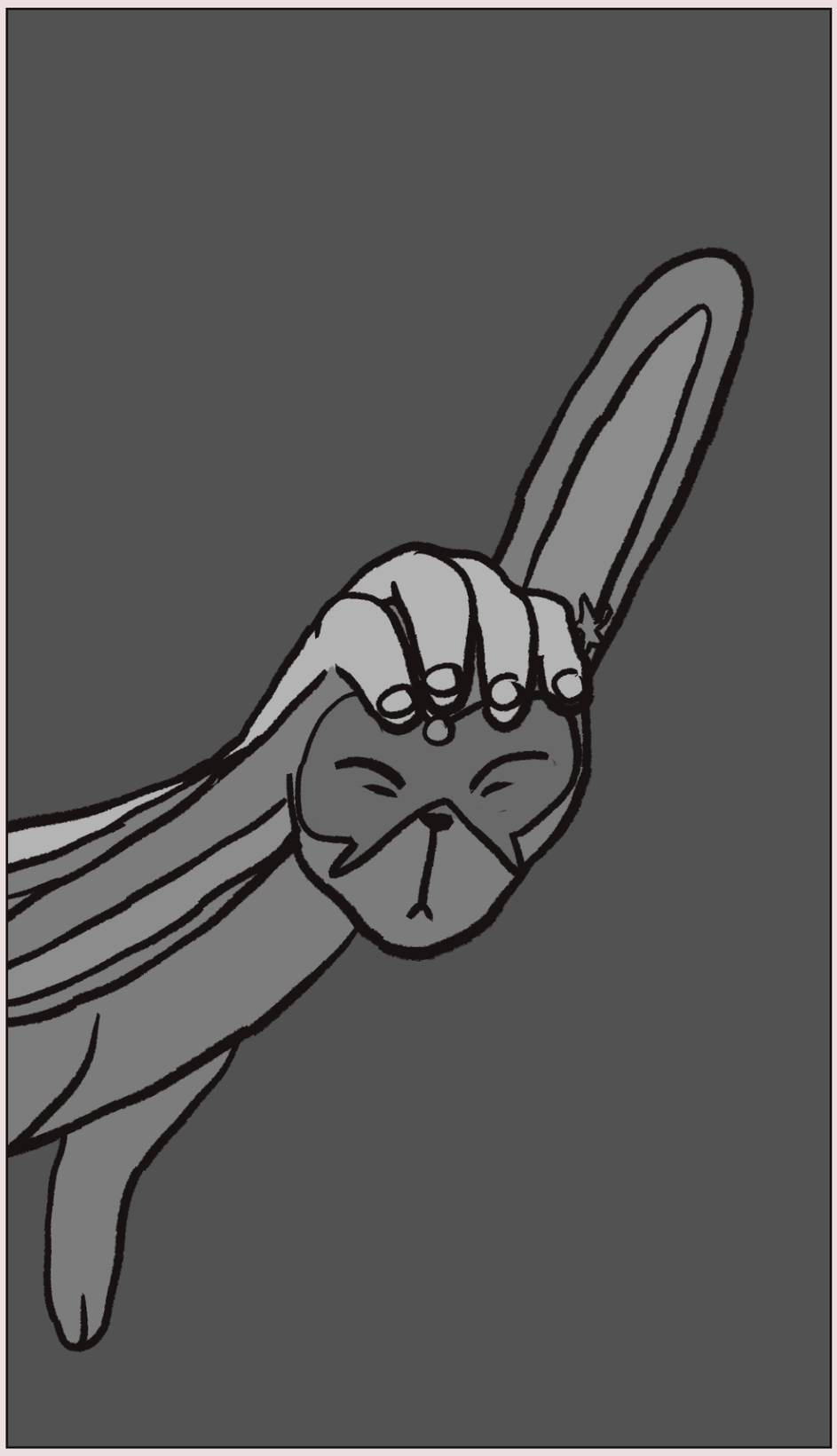
I'M NOT
GOING TO-

IT'S NOT THAT,
OKAY? IT'S NOT

OKAY.

OKAY, GOOD, I- I WAS
WORRIED FOR A MOMENT.
OKAY.

STILL.
YOU CAN TALK TO ME.
YOU KNOW THAT.



CAN YOU...

TELL ME WHAT IT'S LIKE.
TO BE A WOMAN.

ARE THESE...

THOSE FEELINGS, AGAIN?

WHAT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, IN HIGH SCHOOL, MR. GARROWITZ?

DO YOU REMEMBER HIM?

...

WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO DO WITH THIS.

HE TOLD ME THAT YOU... WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER YOU HAD A SESSION WITH HIM WHERE YOU TOLD HIM YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE-

HE FUCKING *TOLD YOU THAT!?*

WHAT ELSE DID HE TELL YOU? HE SAID IT WAS *CONFIDENTIAL.* WHAT THE FUCK ELSE DID HE SAY TO YOU?

...A LOT OF IT. WHAT YOU TALKED ABOUT.

CYRUS, HE WAS *CONCERNED,* HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE SAFE-

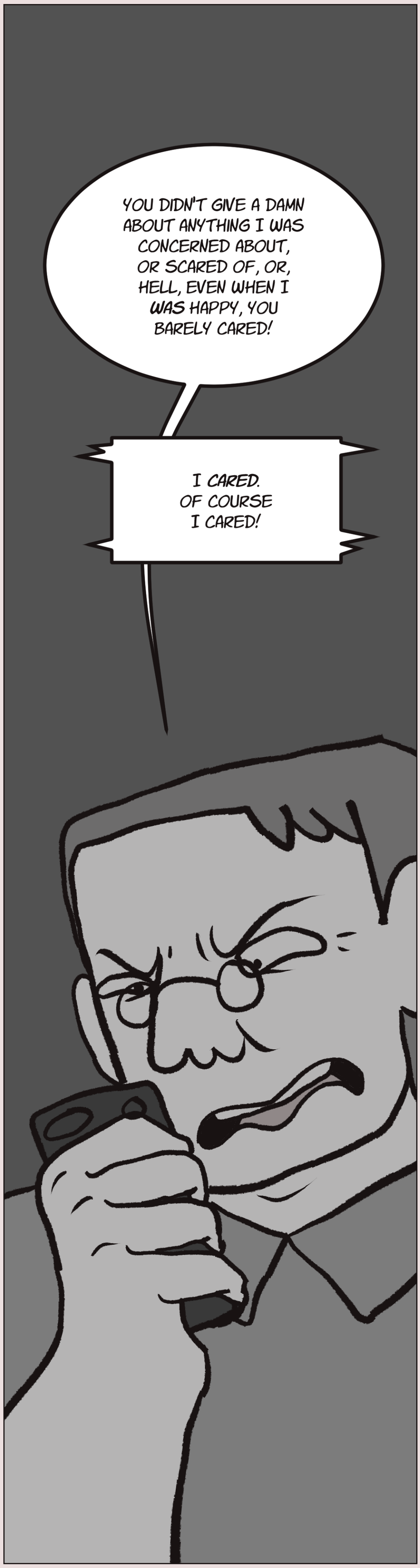
FUCK, FUCK, *FUCK.* YOU *NEVER* TOLD ME ABOUT THIS? EVER? WHAT THE FUCK!

YOU NEVER TALKED TO ME!

YOU *IGNORED* MY PROBLEMS! EVERY TIME I BROUGHT SOMETHING UP, YOU MADE IT SEEM LIKE THE SMALLEST THING IN THE WORLD, LIKE IT DIDN'T FUCKING MATTER.

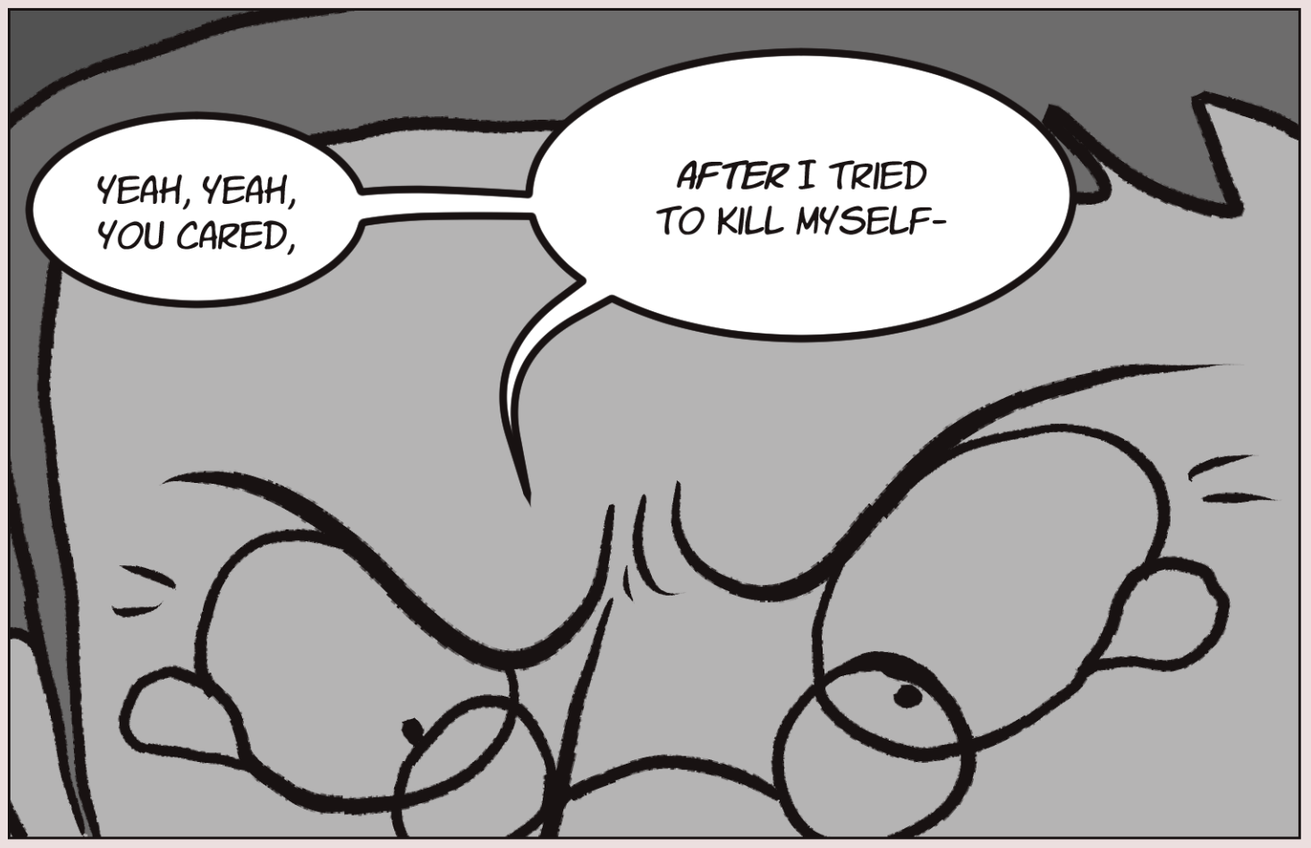
YOU DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANYTHING I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT, OR SCARED OF, OR, HELL, EVEN WHEN I *WAS* HAPPY, YOU BARELY CARED!

I CARED. OF COURSE I CARED!

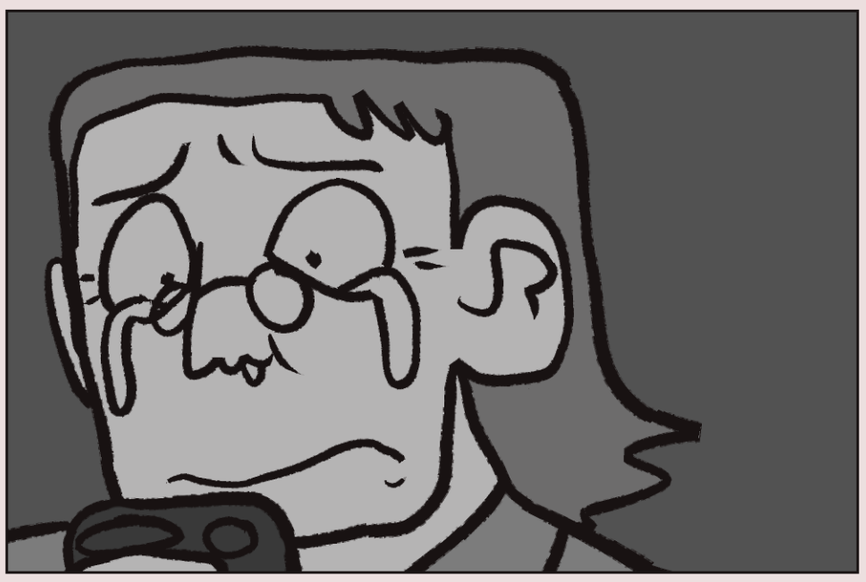


YEAH, YEAH, YOU CARED,

AFTER I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF-



CYRUS.



...

I'M SORRY.

SIGH

...

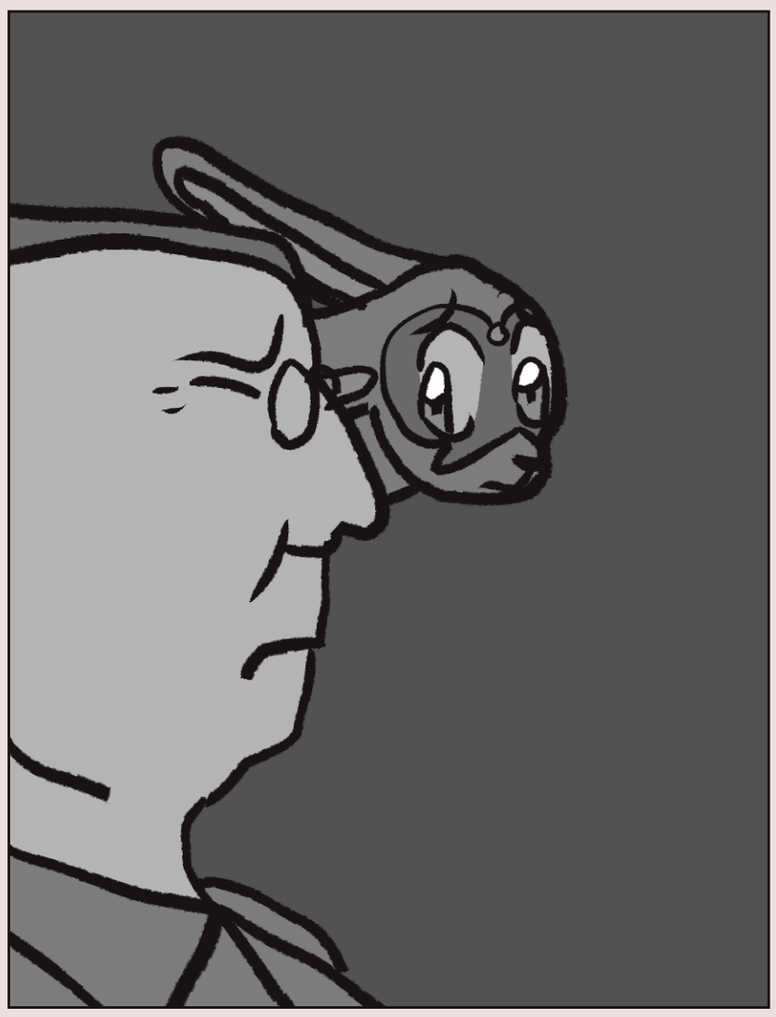
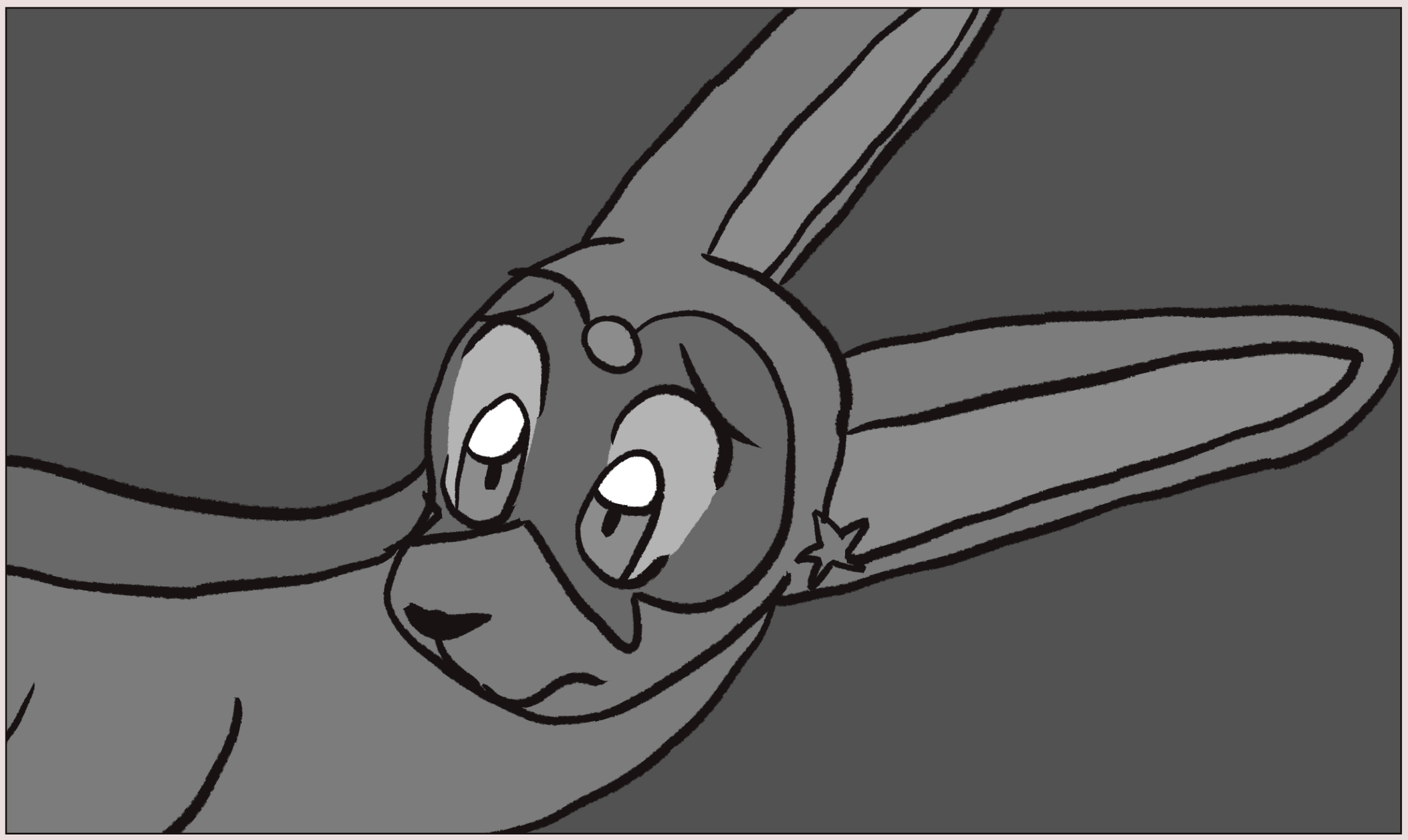
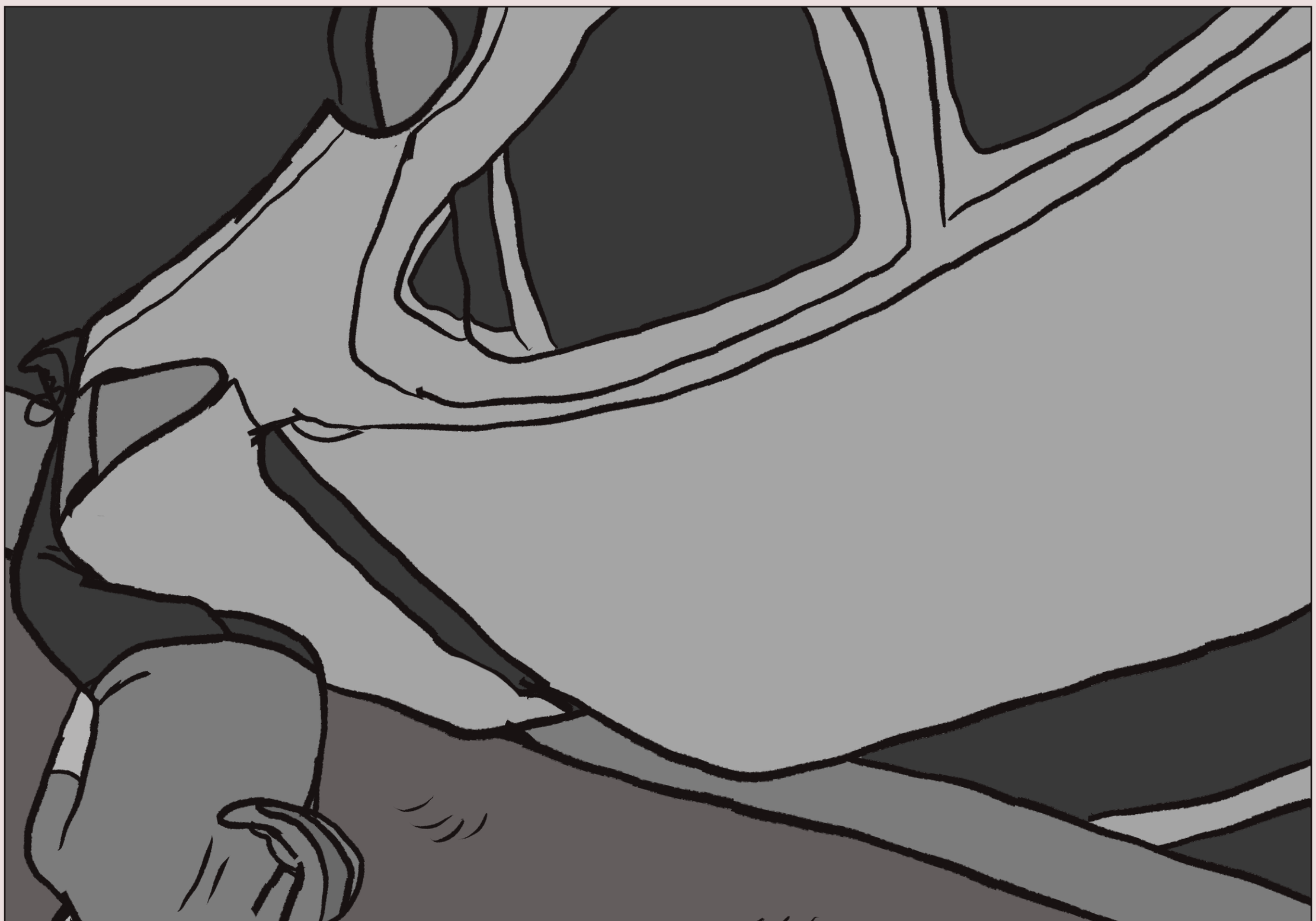
SO WHAT NOW?

I...

DON'T KNOW.

OKAY.

...HAVE A GOOD REST
OF YOUR NIGHT, CYRUS.

YOU TOO.

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